

NEWS

From the Office of

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Emergency Call Boxes Installed Along Fort Irwin Road

FORT IRWIN – (Photo attached) San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Brad Mitzelfelt today was joined the Garrison Commander of the National Training Center at Fort Irwin to mark the installation of the first emergency call box on Fort Irwin Road.

“Soldiers, their families and the civilian employees who work at Fort Irwin deserve to be as safe as possible, especially given the sacrifices they make on behalf of all of us,” Supervisor Mitzelfelt said. “I have long advocated for call boxes on rural roads, and this marks another step on making travel along Fort Irwin Road much safer for everyone who drives that route.”

Previously, there was only one call box in the county located on a non-state highway. The first call box on Fort Irwin Road was installed last week and will be one of 32 to be positioned along the road, which runs about 30 miles between Barstow and Ft. Irwin. Installation of the remaining boxes should be complete by next week.

Historically, Fort Irwin Road was one of the more hazardous roads in the county, before approximately \$22 million in improvements were completed in 2006. In the decade before the improvements were finished, there were 13 fatalities along the road and more than 180 injury accidents. Approximately 5,000 vehicles per day travel on Fort Irwin Road to and from the Army post.

Cell phone coverage is spotty along the route and there are no services between the base and Barstow, meaning there can be major delays in notifying officials about an emergency, or seeking help in the event of a breakdown. The call boxes were positioned based on cell signals. The call boxes are more powerful and have taller antennas, meaning even if a motorist cannot get a cell signal, the call boxes will still function. During collisions cell phones are also often lost or destroyed.

Supervisor Mitzelfelt was contacted in September 2010 by then base commander, Brig. Gen. Robert B. Abrams, who requested that four call boxes be installed. Supervisor Mitzelfelt at the time was president of San Bernardino Associated Governments (SANBAG), the county’s transportation agency, which oversees call boxes within San Bernardino County. At the urging of Supervisor Mitzelfelt, SANBAG obtained the necessary funding and clearances to install the boxes.

Supervisor Mitzelfelt was joined by Col. Kurt J. Pinkerton Monday afternoon on Fort Irwin Road to inspect the first call box to be installed. The project cost \$41,276 and is funded by a fee for call box services on vehicle registrations. Since the call box program in San Bernardino County began in 1990, there have been 1.9 million calls made, and today there are about 14,000 calls per year made. Of calls made, 72 percent are for nonemergency assistance and 12.6 percent are for emergencies.



San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt and Garrison Commander of the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Col. Kurt J. Pinkerton, on May 8, 2012 at the first emergency call box installed on Fort Irwin Road.